

Last week, Congressional Democrats and the Obama administration finally unveiled their long awaited health-care plan.

The bill is 1,017 pages long, and is the single worst piece of public policy I have seen in my time in elected office. I obviously cannot give you all of the details in this short space here, but suffice it to say, the proposal is nothing short of full blown, single-payer, socialized medicine, although I wouldn't expect the president to sell it as such.

The bill raises taxes on high income Americans, as has been well publicized. Under this plan, the top tax rate in California will be north of 57%, which is higher than those in virtually every European country, including Sweden.

However, what is not well publicized is that the bill will impose a tax on anyone who does not buy health insurance. It also makes it virtually illegal and cost prohibitive to buy your own insurance if you don't already have it by the date the bill is put into law.

Within five years, this legislation will transition two out of every three Americans who currently have insurance on to the government plan. On the whole, we will have government-only medicine with the compassion of the IRS and the efficiency of the DMV.

Whether you can receive treatments will be determined by a government bureaucrat where, as currently happens in Britain, they will decide if your life or well being is worth the money and the government's trouble. Although, at least in Britain, you are able to buy your own private health coverage (which is in high demand as everyone tries to get out of the National Health Service), this proposed bill will effectively forbid that option for Americans.

This is awful on so many levels. Fifteen percent of Americans are currently uninsured, but one-third of those are able to afford it, but they just choose to not purchase insurance and

gamble that they won't need it.

Another third are eligible for Medicaid and SCHIP, but don't enroll. This plan will, in effect, ruin the quality of health care and increase the cost for 95% of us in an attempt to insure the other 5%.

According to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, it will not insure all those who are uninsured, will cost more overall than the current system does, and risks taking the unsustainable budget deficit we have now and make it far worse!

We should actually be going in the opposite direction. Rather than giving the government more control over health care, we need to give individuals more and the government less.

We should eliminate the government control systems we have, and instead, use the money to give refundable tax credits to allow everyone to buy their own insurance. People should be able to buy plans across state lines, which would make the more than 1,300 health plans now available to everyone.

This debate isn't just about money. For instance, survival rates for diseases such as breast cancer and heart attacks are actually 30% to 50% lower in countries with socialized medicine.

This debate is truly about whether tens of millions of Americans die sooner than they otherwise would. This is a debate we cannot afford to lose.